

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of processing meat which comprises the steps of contacting bodies of meat with a treating solution; agitating said bodies of meat in contact with said treatment solution in an agitator at an elevated temperature for the bodies of meat of substantially 45°F to 60°F until said bodies of meat are substantially dry; and recovering said bodies of meat in a substantially dry state, wherein the step of recovering the bodies of meat further comprises the step of agitating the bodies of meat simultaneously with cooling the bodies of meat.

2-11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of controlling the temperature of the bodies of meat within  $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{F}$  during the agitation of the bodies of meat.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of maintaining the temperature of the bodies of meat substantially constant during the agitating step.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13 wherein the step of agitating the bodies of meat takes place for a period of time sufficient to distribute the treating solution in the bodies of meat.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13 wherein the step of maintaining the temperature of the bodies of meat substantially constant comprises directly measuring a temperature of the bodies of meat and adjusting the temperature of the agitator in response to a measured temperature of the bodies of meat.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15 wherein the step of directly measuring the temperature of the bodies of meat comprises contacting the bodies of meat in the agitator with a temperature sensor.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the step of contacting the bodies of meat with a temperature sensor comprises inserting the temperature sensor into the bodies of meat.
18. (Canceled)
19. (Canceled)
20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the bodies of meat are selectively heated and cooled in the agitator by selectively passing a heated or cooled fluid through a jacket secured to the agitator.
21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of contacting the bodies of meat with the treating solution comprises injecting the bodies of meat with an inject at a temperature less than the elevated temperature.
22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein the temperature less than the elevated temperature is substantially 15°F to 40°F below the elevated temperature.
23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the agitator is selected from the group consisting of a rotary paddle massager and a tumbler.
24. (Currently Amended) A method of processing meat which comprises the steps of contacting bodies of meat with a treating solution; agitating said bodies of meat in contact with said treatment solution to maintain the bodies of meat at a temperature of substantially 43°F to 60°F until said bodies of meat are substantially dry; and recovering said bodies of meat in a substantially dry state, wherein the step of recovering the bodies of meat further comprises the step of agitating the bodies of meat simultaneously with cooling the bodies of meat.
25. (Canceled)
26. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of cooling the bodies of meat comprises reducing the temperature of the bodies of meat to a temperature less than the elevated temperature.
27. (New) The method of claim 26 wherein the temperature less than the elevated temperature is substantially 15°F to 40°F below the elevated temperature.

28. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein the step of cooling the bodies of meat comprises reducing the temperature of the bodies of meat to a temperature substantially 15°F to 40°F below the elevated temperature.

29. (New) A method of processing meat comprising the steps of: a) contacting bodies of meat originally presented at a low temperature with a treating solution; b) massaging said bodies of meat in contact with said treating solution at a predetermined elevated temperature above said low temperature and maintaining said elevated temperature substantially constant while agitating said meat for a period of time sufficient to distribute the treating solution in the meat in a treating vessel and substantially to dryness whereby the treating solution is incorporated in the bodies of meat; c) thereafter cooling the bodies of meat in the treating vessel; and d) recovering said bodies of meat in a cooled state below said elevated temperature, substantially dry and with the treating solution incorporated therein.

30. (New) The method of claim 29 wherein the step of cooling the bodies of meat comprises reducing the temperature of the bodies of meat with to a temperature less than the elevated temperature.

31. (New) The method of claim 30 wherein the temperature less than the elevated temperature is substantially 15°F to 40°F below the elevated temperature.